



Joint Commission
on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations

Representative Bronna Kahle
District 57
N-991 House Office Building
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Representative Kahle:

I am writing you today requesting your support for Senate Bill 541, legislation to introduce dental therapists in Michigan. Family Medical Center of Michigan (FMC) serves more than 20,000 residents throughout Monroe and Lenawee counties. In 2017, FMC provided 17,802 dental appointments to 6,069 patients in its dental units in Adrian, Temperance and Carleton.

Despite our robust dental clinic operations, we still have more patients than we can provide care for and we need options to increase our dental workforce capacity, including the option to expanding our practice through utilizing dental therapists. At our Adrian Center the waiting time to get a dental appointment is 7 weeks for a new patient and 6 weeks for a follow-up appointment. The basic reason for the lengthy waiting time is that the Adrian Center lacks dentists. We have had a dentist position open at the Adrian Center for almost 11 months. Many community health centers, especially in rural areas, have found it very difficult recruiting dentists to work in their dental units.

We can understand that some dentists feeling "threatened" by this newly created dental therapist position but, for an organization like ours, we can definitely see it as being beneficial. We can increase our encounters to the under-served dental population while keeping the costs lower by employing a mix of dentists and dental therapists.

FMC is encouraged that the House Committee on Health Policy is exploring options to address the access to oral health care issue and Senate Bill 541 is a critical step to improve access to dental care and create a true dental home for hundreds of thousands of Michiganders. In Lenawee County we believe that having the opportunity to employ dental therapists would be god-send to many thousands of Lenawee County residents who desperately need dental care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Larkins".

Ed Larkins
Chief Executive Officer